

BY BRIAN KNOX

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Kyle Stephens has always known he'd like to run for county judge. It just needed to be at the right time.

Stephens, a Decatur resident, announced this week that he will run as a Republican candidate for Wise County judge in next March's primary.

He previously served as Precinct 1 county commissioner from 1993-1996 and again from 2001-2004. He resisted the temptation to run for the office a third time.

"After I lost that race (in 2004), people wanted me to run again for commissioner, but I told them, 'Never again.' The next time you see my name on the ballot it will be for county judge," he said.

But he didn't want to run against his friend, County Judge Bill McElhaney.

"Out of respect for him, I wouldn't run against him," Stephens said.

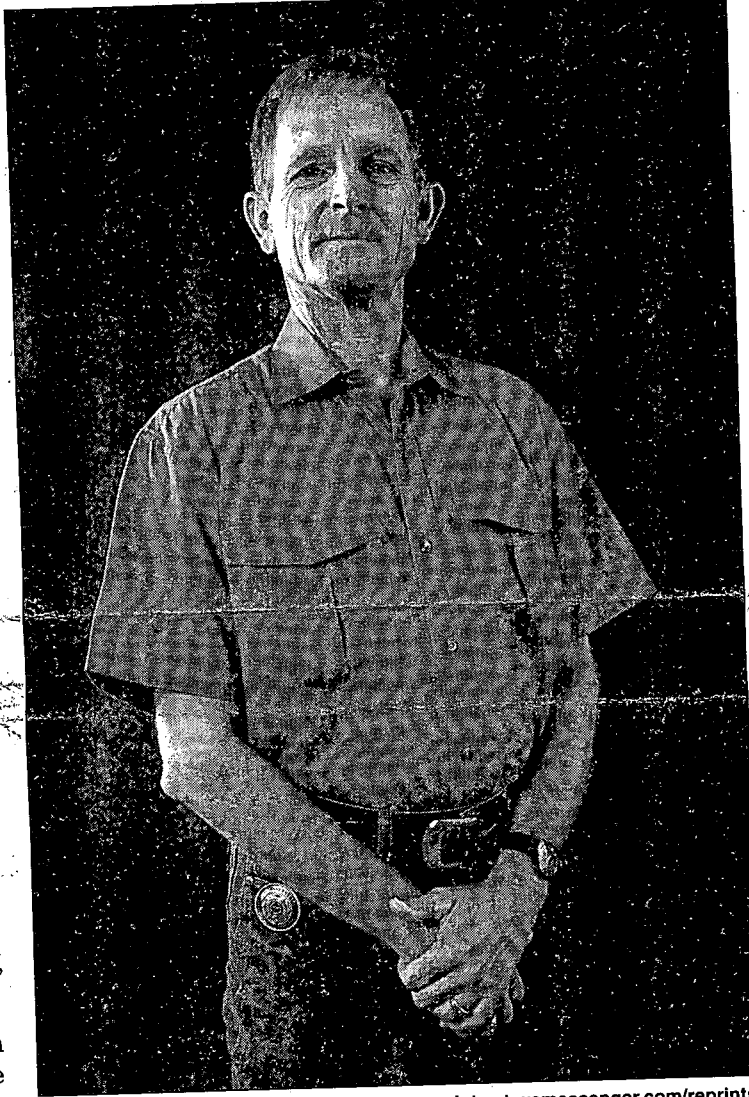
After McElhaney's death on Oct. 14, Stephens said he began receiving phone calls from people who knew of his ambitions, and they encouraged him to run.

The time was right, he said.

"When I look back at my life, I have always served the citizens on a local, county and state level," Stephens wrote in a press release. "I want to continue giving back to the people of Wise County."

Except for a few years when he was in college at Texas Tech University in Lubbock and working in Kilgore for a few years, Stephens has spent his entire life in Wise County. He was inspired to enter public service by his father, who spent 12 years as a member of the Decatur school board.

"Watching him do that, and give back to the people who gave to him, that's what I wanted to do was serve," he said. "When I came back to Decatur in 1986, I joined the fire department, and I've been



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RUNNING FOR JUDGE — Former county commissioner Kyle Stephens has announced he will run for county judge.

had spent all their money, and so I had little to work with and had to build it up," he said. "By the time I had it built up, well, it's time for election again, and people weren't happy because some things weren't getting done."

But Stephens said he's proud of the work he did as commissioner and can point to roads built during his time in office that are still in good condition.

"You can throw something down to make it look good, but it won't last," he said.

That time provided him with valuable experience both working on and sticking to a budget, giving him management experience, he said, to go along with his experience as a facilities superintendent and as owner

growth and water.

"I think growth is always going to be an issue," he said. "With growth you've got infrastructure and services you are going to have to keep providing. How are we going to pay for it?"

Stephens said it is important to attract businesses to the county to lessen the tax burden on citizens.

Another growth-related issue is the need for a centralized county government building. Stephens said it is important to get those buildings that currently house county offices in various locations back on the tax rolls.

Protecting water resources, both for current and future residents, is also a high prior-

ity for the county, he said.

In addition to his county service, Stephens has also served as a board member of the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association, including two years as president. He said the association is the largest fire organization in the nation and ninth-largest association of any kind in the state of Texas. As a board member, he also gained experience working on the association's budget and purchase of a new office.

Stephens was born in Fort Worth to the late Coy and Virginia Stephens. He is married to Debbie and has two children, Kyle Jr. and wife, Heather, and Misty Loffler; two stepchildren, Rachel Wasson and Ranie Woodruff; and four grandchildren, Maven, Chloe, Zane and Kade.

He graduated from Texas Tech with a bachelor's degree in agriculture science in 1979, is a member of the Church of Christ and a 27-year member of the Decatur Fire Department. He has previously served as an officer on the Decatur Economic Development Corp. board and was appointed to a two-year term on a North Central Texas Council of Government grant committee by Governor Rick Perry.

In Stephens' announcement, Wise County Republican Chairman Allen Williamson said, "I've known Kyle for over a decade. He is a great guy, and I am pleased that he has indicated he intends to run in the primary for county judge."

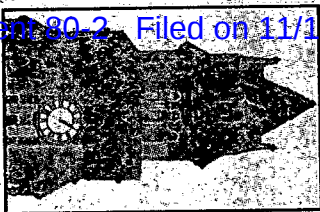
If elected as county judge, Stephens said he would turn over his business to his son, who is working for him, so that he could be a full-time judge.

So far, only one other candidate, J.D. Clark of Chico, has announced his intention to run for county judge. He also intends to run in the Republican primary.

Wise County

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WISE EYES

Crimestoppers and the Wise County Sheriff's Office want you to be aware of where sex offenders reside in Wise County. **INSIDE**

MATTERS OF THE HEART

Photographer Joe Duty uses the camera to cope in the midst of a health crisis. See page 2

BATTLE OF 114

The Boyd Yellowjackets and Paradise Panthers prepare to face off in a rivalry game Friday night. **SPORTS**, page 14



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28 PAGES IN 2 SECTIONS PLUS INSERTS

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WISE COUNTY

for Clerk of Court, Houston TX
SDTX 3:11cv511

County attorney calls for removal of Ross

BY KRISTEN TRIBE

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The document calls for Ross to be removed from office without a jury trial.

County Attorney James Stainton filed an amended petition for removal Monday in the case against suspended Precinct 4 Commissioner Terry Ross.

"The game changed dramatically with the conviction," said Stainton. "(Ross) signed a judicial confession to the things alleged in the indictment."

The original petition for removal was filed by citizen Lane Akin in June 2012 when Ross was under indictment by a grand jury for tampering with government records and abuse of official capacity. In the months following the original petition, Ross was also

indicted for theft of \$500 to \$1,500. Just last month, Ross pleaded guilty to abuse of official capacity, and the other two charges were dismissed as part of a plea agreement, which gave him \$500 restitution and 180 days in jail, probation for one year.

In the petition filed in the 271st District Court, says Ross' guilty plea a series of government property offenses official misconduct can result in removal from office.

See Ross on

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Ross: Civil suit moves forward

Continued from page 1

according to Local Government Code 87.013.

The code defines "official misconduct" as "intentional unlawful behavior relating to official duties

by an officer entrusted with administration of justice or execution of the law. The term includes an intentional or corrupt failure, refusal or neglect of an officer to perform a duty imposed on the officer by law."

Stainton also says in the petition that Ross should be removed for incompetency under the same code

Court, Houston TX because his "actions constitute a gross ignorance of official duties" and he exhibited "gross carelessness in discharge of those duties."

Stainton notes that the same section of code requires a jury trial for removal involving official misconduct, but he argues in the petition that since Ross waived his right to a jury trial through his guilty plea in the criminal case, a jury trial shouldn't be required for Ross' removal.

Ross sent a letter last week to Precinct 2 Commissioner Kevin Burns demanding he be reinstated

SDTX 3:11cv511

to his position "with all his back pay and lawyer expenses, per the Texas Local Government Code."

Ross also demanded that his personal items be returned immediately, including a "tree house with climbing wall and ladder; fish fryer with two, 5-gallon propane tanks; office chairs; diesel pump; picnic table; Stihl leaf blower; pressure washer; etc."

As of Saturday, Nov. 2, Ross' back pay will total \$110,753.12.

Ross' attorney, Trent Loftin, declined to comment on the amended petition for removal, but he

did confirm that Ross sent a letter to the county demanding he get his job back.

Stainton has also filed an original petition for leave to file information in quo warranto, which asks the district judge to declare the Precinct 4 commissioner post "vacant," if the removal goes through.

Stainton says the next steps include normal pre-trial procedures.

"I'm hopeful that because we've done so much investigation with the criminal case that this will move along faster than a typical civil case," he said.

for Clerk of Court WISE COUNTY
Houston TX SDTX 3:11cv511

Interim judge to be named after filing period

Oct 30 13

BY KRISTEN TRIBE
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Wise County commissioners will wait until after the Dec. 9 filing deadline to name an interim county judge.

The commissioners court met for the first time Mon-

day since the death of County Judge Bill McElhaney Oct. 14. They agreed that waiting until after the filing deadline was the fairest course of action.

"I don't think it's appropriate to name a replacement until the filing period for the primary closes," said

Precinct 2 Commissioner Kevin Burns.

Since Burns is the senior commissioner, he will fulfill the judge's duties until an interim is named, but he does not plan to vacate his own office to fill the judge's post.

Burns suggested forming a committee at the Nov. 12

commissioners meeting to begin considering candidates.

"I'd consider anybody who hasn't talked to me in the last two weeks," he said. "It was just almost inappropriate the way folks were offering themselves [following McElhaney's death]."

attira

Homeowners expect faux graveyard to be a kid magnet on Halloween

BY BRANDON EVANS

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It's amazing what a kid will do for candy.

Unlike zombies, vampires and ghosts, the spirit of dressing up and trick or treating for Halloween is far from dead.

Halloween is the fourth most popular holiday in terms of consumer spending, trailing only Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter according to Alliance Data.



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